

Ukraine; and Janet Norwood, mother of Sgt. Byron Norwood, USMC, who was killed in Iraq on November 13, 2004, and Iraqi citizen and political activist Safia Taleb al-Suhail,

both of whom were guests of the First Lady at the President's State of the Union Address on February 2.

Statement on Senate Passage of Class-Action Lawsuit Reform Legislation *February 10, 2005*

Our country depends on a fair legal system that protects people who have been harmed without encouraging junk lawsuits that undermine confidence in our courts while hurting our economy, costing jobs, and threatening small businesses. The class-action bill is a strong step forward in our

efforts to reform the litigation system and keep America the best place in the world to do business. I applaud the strong bipartisan majority in the Senate for passing this bill, and I call on the House to act promptly so that I can sign it into law.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Michael O. Leavitt as Secretary of Health and Human Services *February 11, 2005*

The President. Good morning. I'm proud to visit this fine Department and to congratulate my friend Michael Leavitt on becoming America's 20th Secretary of Health and Human Services. Congratulations.

Secretary Leavitt. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I know this is a particularly special day for Mike—after all, it's his 54th birthday. *[Laughter]* And it's always a special day for him when his family members are here. He loves his family. He's got a great wife named Jackie; Westin is here representing his brothers and sisters; his dad's first name is Dixie—kind of sounds like he should be from Texas. *[Laughter]* Appreciate the other members of the Leavitt family who are here.

I want to thank Senator Bob Bennett from the great State of Utah for joining us, and Congressman Ralph Regula for being here. I appreciate you both coming. I want to thank other members of my Cabi-

net and administration who have joined us. I particularly want to thank the men and women of Health and Human Services for your hard work and remind you that you're serving during a critical time for America's health and well-being.

Thanks to Secretary Tommy Thompson's superb leadership, HHS has helped our medical community prepare for a new era in public health. You've made groundbreaking progress toward new cures for disability and disease. You've led a bold initiative to win the global fight against HIV/AIDS. The good work of this Department is making America healthier and more hopeful, and I thank each of you for your commitment and your compassion.

As Secretary Leavitt begins his service, HHS is embarking on a set of new challenges and historic opportunities. One of your most important responsibilities will be implementing the Medicare Modernization Act, which I signed some 14 months ago.